

ALEISTER CROWLEY'S SATANISM

BY FRATER OBITUS



"Four Red Monks Carrying a Black Goat across the Snows to Nowhere"
Painting by Aleister Crowley

OF all the topics associated with the Great Beast 666, perhaps the most divisive amongst occultists is the existence or non-existence of Crowley's "Satanism," and if it can be evidenced to exist, to what extent is it important to Thelema as a whole. Sparse as they are, Crowley's direct discussions of "Satan" unashamedly rush to the very core of Crowley's cosmology and worldview, and are not hard to find. But those who can't stomach equating their Deities too closely with the "Devil" of Christendom will always find a way to shove the whole issue under the rug, usually by the method of denying all "Devilish" aspects to the word "Satan," treating it only as the generic Hebrew term for "Adversary," or, aimlessly wandering into discussions about the Arabic species of Jinn known as "Shaitans," anything to get away from the figure of "THE Devil."

In *Magick in Theory and Practice*, Crowley famously stated the oft-quoted line:

“The Devil does not exist. It is a false name invented by the Black Brothers to imply a Unity in their ignorant muddle of dispersions. A devil who had unity would be a God.”

Many see this line, rejoice that they have finally found the truth about Crowley’s views on Satan, and consider the case closed. Obviously, anyone who comes to such a conclusion from this line neglected to read the footnote to this passage on the very same page:

“‘The Devil’ is, historically, the God of any people that one personally dislikes. This has led to so much confusion of thought that THE BEAST 666 has preferred to let names stand as they are, and to proclaim simply that AIWAZ, the solar-phallic-hermetic ‘Lucifer,’ is His own Holy Guardian Angel, and ‘The Devil’ SATAN or HADIT, the Supreme Soul behind RA-HOOR-KHUIT the Sun, the Lord of our particular unit of the Starry Universe. This serpent, SATAN, is not the enemy of Man, but He who made Gods of our race, knowing Good and Evil; He bade ‘Know Thyself!’ and taught Initiation. He is ‘the Devil’ of the Book of Thoth, and His emblem is BAPHOMET, the Androgyne who is the hieroglyph of arcane perfection. The number of His Atu is XV, which is Yod He, the Monogram of the Eternal, the Father one with the Mother, the Virgin Seed one with all-containing Space. He is therefore Life, and Love. But moreover his letter is Ayin, the Eye; he is Light, and his Zodiacal image is Capricornus, that leaping goat whose attribute is Liberty.”

Now, for some reason, many of those who have noticed this supremely important footnote have seemed to somehow either not comprehend the gravity of this short statement, or purposefully try to downplay the importance. It is clear here that Crowley is not saying that an entity popularly known as “The Devil” does not exist. He is saying that the Judeo-

Christian concept of a supremely powerful deity of pure “evil” does not exist. Crowley clearly does not believe that the “God of any people that one personally dislikes” is nonexistent just because you don’t like them. What does not exist is the false Christian idea of anti-God of evil. Also, Crowley is certainly not trying to say that Hadit does not exist in the footnote. Nor is he implying that it is a case of mistaken identity between Hadit and Satan; nobody made that identification but Crowley himself.

What Crowley is referencing here by “confusion of thought,” and what has led to it, is the long, complicated, and often muddled definitions of who and what the Devil is. Crowley was more than acquainted with this long history and its confusions, and therefore opted to “state simply” who and what “Satan” and the “The Devil” is to him. And, to Crowley, Satan is Aiwaz, the author of the Book of the Law, and is equated with Hadit, and also the “Spiritual Sun” behind Ra-Hoor-Khuit. It is easy to see why this passage is targeted out as being some sort of joke or blind, when there is nothing to suggest such a thing. Crowley is not arguing a case of mistaken identity here, he is arguing a case of mistaken character. He is not saying that it’s silly to equate Thelema with Satan because Satan is a concept of evil not shared in Thelema. He is saying that it is silly to equate Satan with a concept of evil not shared in Thelema.

Many will still object that the passage refers not to the individual Spirit known as “The Devil” popularly, but to etymological roots of concepts. I really hate having to repeat and emphasize parts of this footnote that everyone is familiar with, but I don’t really know what else to do in this instance. “Satan.” “Lucifer.” “The Devil.” One could get away with turning it all into a reference to Roman venusian deities, Hebrew slurs, and Arabic demonology, if it were not for the fact that all three terms were used deliberately by Crowley in the same sentence. Crowley was more than aware of the history of those terms, and knew very well that if you use all

three labels together for the same entity, (in this case for Aiwaz,) it makes it unmistakeable who and what he means.

The uncomfortable (for many) conclusion, if one takes Crowley's words seriously, is that Satan is literally the heart of Thelema. Oddly enough, nobody seems to have much of a problem at all with using the Greek Pan as an alternative figurehead for the religion of Life, Love, and Liberty, and we all know how often the name of Pan is uttered in the Book of the Law: absolutely none.

It is often objected that "Crowley never calls his religion Satanism." This we will concede; he never did. However, Crowley's vehement reactions to being labelled a "Black Magician" are legendary. Yet, for all the times he was openly called a "Devil Worshipper," and the religion he preached, "Satanism," Crowley's righteous indignation is nowhere to be found. One of the men who wrote in the papers that Crowley and his followers were "Devil Worshipers" was William Seabrook, a personal friend of Crowley's, both before and after the "inflammatory" article was published.

I am not implying that Crowley was dishonest and his entire religion really is an inverted Christianity devoted to the worship of a fallen rebel from the court of JHVH. I am instead insisting that Crowley, while identifying the central deities of his religion with Satan, he was teaching a radically different notion of who and what this being is, while maintaining that it is indeed the same being.

I think it would be useful to add a selection of excerpts from Crowley's diary entries during his stay at the Abbey of Thelema. Published in the rarely seen *The Magical Record of the Beast 666*, these diary entries exhibit even further Crowley's complete identification of Aiwaz with the Devil:

"She certainly gave me what I've been losing. Youth's intensity, its craving, the soul-priapism, huge lust and fierce to her, clamour for her to realize with me that mightiest marriage-dream, that Sacrament of Satan that may be consummated only beneath Night's

dome, in utmost silence, because its Elements are not symbols of things, but They themselves.”

“When I was Levi, I drew myself as Ayin or Baphomet, 'The Devil' with Beast's Head. This is the Beast throned, crowned, exalted; the leaper, the erect, the butter-in. Her womb is my city, Babel. This Ayin is then my phallic will, my Holy Guardian Angel, Aiwaz, who was afterwards called Satan.”

“Come, Come, Come, Aiwaz! Come, thou Devil Our Lord!”

“My light! O my father the Devil! It hath made all things one, being perfect, even as doth the Darkness!”

“And Her Concoction shall be sweet in our mixed mouths, the Sacrament that giveth thanks to Aiwaz, our Lord God the Devil, that He hath fused His Beast's soul with His Scarlet Whore's, to be One Soul completed, that It may set His image in the Temple of Man, and thrust His Will's rod over them and rule them. And that imperléd sea, dark with that oozy shore-mud which it washed, shall wash us, body and mind, of all that is not He, moisten our throats and loosen our loud Song of praise, Thanksgiving unto Him.”

“I sing for God, our Devil, our Lord, Aiwaz.”

“. . . and know that all my joy, perfect, transcending sense, is given of Aiwaz, whom we call the Devil, whose name is Will, loud-uttered by cocaine, is Love.”

“Our Lord the Devil's their Word, the Word Thelema, spoken of me The Beast.”

“I with Alostrael alone - we shall do Magick unto our Lord the Devil such as the Earth hath never known.”

“Yea! as I loath, I lust; I prostitute myself to thee, perversely prurient - Wilt thou not make this night the nameless nuptial, the Devil thy Lord and mine at Our Black Mass?”

“I invoked Aiwaz, was shown a phantasm of Baphomet, and suddenly determined to recognize this for Him!”

And from *Liber Samekh*:

“Thou spiritual Sun! Satan, Thou Eye, Thou Lust! Cry aloud! Cry aloud! Whirl the Wheel, O my Father, O Satan, O Sun! Thou, the Saviour! Silence! Give me Thy Secret! Give me suck, Thou Phallus, Thou Sun! Satan, thou Eye, thou Lust! Satan, thou Eye, thou Lust! Satan, thou Eye, thou Lust! Thou self-caused, self-determined, exalted, Most High!”

“Now this word SABAF, being by number Three score and Ten, is a name of Ayin, the Eye, and the Devil our Lord, and the Goat of Mendes. He is the Lord of the Sabbath of the Adepts, and is Satan, therefore also the Sun, whose number of Magick is 666, the seal of His servant the BEAST.”

To this we may add further from *Magick in Theory and Practice*:

“The exalted “Devil” (also the other secret Eye) by the formula of the Initiation of Horus elsewhere described in detail. This “Devil” is called Satan or Shaitan, and regarded with horror by people who are ignorant of his formula, and, imagining themselves to be evil, accuse Nature herself of their own phantasmal crime. Satan is Saturn, Set, Abrasax, Adad, Adonis, Attis, Adam, Adonai, etc. The most serious charge against him is that he is the Sun in the South. . .

“We have therefore no scruple in restoring the ‘devil-worship’ of such ideas as those which the laws of sound, and the phenomena of speech and hearing, compel us to connect with the group of ‘Gods’ whose names are based upon ShT, or D, vocalized by the free breath A. For these Names imply the qualities of courage, frankness, energy, pride, power and triumph; they are the words which express the creative and paternal will.

“Thus ‘the Devil’ is Capricornus, the Goat who leaps upon the loftiest mountains, the Godhead which, if it become manifest in man, makes him Aegipan, the All.”

It is often asserted that Crowley did not worship “the Devil,” even though Crowley clearly worships (i.e., identifies himself with) Hadit, whom he clearly wants us to know is the Devil. The objection to using the same terminology Crowley was comfortable with ultimately rests on “but Hadit is NOT EVIL and NOT A FALLEN ANGEL” hence “not the Devil.” But this is an absurd and misguided distinction to insist on making, because it assumes the only way to define “Devil Worship” is by using a slanderous and negative definition of “the Devil.”

It seems that not many are content to follow Crowley’s lead and simply “let names stand as they are” when it comes to someone’s worship of what they acknowledge to be “the Devil.” Many insist that “Devil Worship” has to bear the meaning of “worship of evil,” a nihilistic, religious manifestation of frustration towards the Life itself.

But I digress. What does Satan have to do with the Law of Thelema exactly? If one has been following my logic, I think it’s apparent where this is going: Satan-Lucifer is the author of the the Book of the Law, and Crowley himself DID say this. For too long it has been assumed and taught that for one to say “Satan wrote Liber AL,” it means one is defining who and what Aiwaz is by Christian theological concepts of Satan. But the exact opposite is what I am proposing: I am insisting that the theological concepts of Liber AL should define who and what SATAN is, not that Christian myth should define the author of Liber AL.

To stress this point again: Proclaiming Satan as the author of Liber AL is NOT an assertion that Liber AL was written by a fallen god of “evil” rebelling against the Cosmos. Proclaiming Satan as the author of Liber AL is INSTEAD an assertion that orthodox religions have been entirely wrong as to THEIR characterization of the being known as SATAN, and Liber AL is HIS message to man setting the record straight.

Liber AL is not contradictory to traditional Satanism, because after all, what is “Satanism” historically besides a term that covers any religious manifestation of the conscious

worship of “Satan?” We have no written creeds or rules of conduct and morality from medieval witches. Their Satanism was not a “revealed religion.” There is no pre-existing “holy text” that Satanism was founded on for Liber AL to be in conflict with.

All we really know of the beliefs of classical Satanism is that Satan was revered as Divine to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the coven, and that his Bride was also occasionally held in more or less equal importance. We also know that however they viewed the Devil, their worship of Him more often than not involved ecstatic group sexual practices which hints at some sort of libertine philosophy.

None of these things are at all incompatible with the concept of deity or worship presented in Liber AL. If anything, the witch-cult could be seen as one of the many precursors or foreshadowing of the Law as encountered in the Old Aeon. And in the opinion of this author, the moral and theological concepts of Liber AL work to enrich Witchcraft/Satanism with a higher purpose and focus that was (as far as we can tell) only vaguely perceived by Satan’s cultists in centuries gone by.

I think any reader without an extreme prejudice towards the Devil and His works will at this point have no serious objections to the statement that Crowley considered “Satanism” to be completely in the bounds of what could be considered “Thelemic.” Hence Diabolists who have accepted the Law of Thelema are more than justified in practicing and promulgating forms of Thelemic Satanism/Luciferianism.